

CHAPTER 5

MUSEUMS: ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

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INTRODUCTION

The foregoing chapters have focused on the relationship between museums and communities or segments of the population. This chapter turns to a more general aspect of the relations between museums and their communities in considering questions of access and participation. These concerns have become a topic of debate since the 1960s at all levels inside and outside museums. The main factors prompting this have been the increasing importance of localism in museum affairs, increasing demands for public accountability in the administration of museums and a broadening of the notion of cultural heritage.

LOCALISM

A powerful impact on museums has been the concept of community empowerment and community-centred approaches to culture, power, and citizenship rights. In the last decade we have seen a re-emergence of concerns about localism, regionalism and particularism; concerns that are closely linked to questions about multiculturalism and communitarianism. It is a trend that often runs counter to increasing nationalism and the growing globalisation of economic relationships (Galla, 1993). In a polemic for local arts, Michael Bogle appealed for greater attention to regional strategies, which would, he argues, result in a decentralisation and de-specialisation of collecting policies, encourage greater community participation, and restore a sense of community (1988: 80). Bogle draws on Lewis Mumford's theory of regionalism in which regionalism is defined as 'the adoption of goals that benefit, support or reinforce regional values' (Mumford, 1938). He goes on to argue that when there is a strong sense of national identity, as there is in Australia, regionalism is not a political threat. Rather, he suggests, it 'can push through national uniformities and assume great importance. Although largely unarticulated, regional differences in Australia are often perceived by the public to be of great interest'. He suggests there are two forms of regionalism — 'geographic regionalism' based on political boundaries of administration and 'cultural regionalism' based on

the revival of vernacular language, literature, and a sense of common identities and values. He envisages the role of museums primarily in terms of cultural regionalism:

Galleries should be at the centre of cultural regionalism because they can provide the focus for 'cultural memory', thus ensuring that each local generation has the opportunity to investigate and reassess its artistic past. ... The community roles of regional galleries have largely imparted national values in the arts and crafts and provided venues for travelling exhibitions. The result is that the preservation, investigation and dissemination of regional values have been neglected. Yet this is where Australia's cultural needs are greatest. If regionalism were adopted, it would involve the complete arts and crafts community and this emphasis would encourage the 'arts ecology' so vital to regional success. (Bogle, 1988: 72-80).

Although Bogle is speaking specifically of arts activities, his comments apply equally to artefact collections held by community museums and the historical work undertaken by these and similar organisations.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

Alongside new demands from diverse communities for access and participation in cultural activities there are increasing governmental demands for greater public accountability in the administration of museums. As museum visitation numbers grow, museums promote themselves more extensively and operating costs increase, questions of control, and accountability, become public and political issues. Previous government policies of maintaining such institutions 'at arms length' are being challenged.

In this context, the Department of Finance Discussion Paper, *What Price Heritage?*, demonstrated this shift toward a more interventionist role for government in the cultural arena. The discussion revolved around the concept of a 'public-private' benefits model, where 'public-good benefits' were defined as those 'which accrue to the population generally whether or not individuals participate first-hand as consumers of heritage activity and enjoyment of which cannot be restricted to specific groups', and where 'private-good benefits' were described as those 'enjoyed more or less exclusively' which can be 'assigned to specific individuals or groups and which in some form or other can be marketed' (Department of Finance, 1989: 26, 27). The dis-

cussion paper also noted that its brief was to examine 'the degree to which private benefits have been disguised as public benefits and hence the degree to which public moneys have unnecessarily subsidised direct beneficiaries of institutions and their programs' (Department of Finance, 1989: 28).

Subsequent criticisms, such as *What Value Heritage?* (1990), the reply from the Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories, have read the Department of Finance paper as an exercise in economic rationalism. However, it can also be interpreted as expressing a concern that museums provide improved services for wider categories of citizens rather than serving elite interests, or at least to ensure that the latter are not subsidised by the former. In the same vein, the recent review of the Queensland Museum (the latest in a round of State government reviews of museum activities in the respective States) was framed around concepts of accountability and access.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

The last decades have seen a widening concept of cultural heritage to incorporate landscapes, streetscapes, heritage areas, photographs and intangible aspects of culture including oral histories and personal memories. The result is a more holistic approach to culture that takes in whole ways of life, whole ecosystems, and whole communities. As a consequence new historical spaces are being defined and marketed; and an expanded range of objects is being re-evaluated as 'valued' artefacts. Activities that had been private and limited in audience, deemed irrelevant, outdated, marginal or becoming extinct, are being rejuvenated, opened up and celebrated.

Museums are adopting strategies to meet these challenges by extending their collecting activities to cover more recent histories, collecting in new areas (photographs, recordings, etc), re-evaluating existing collections and gap-filling with new symbols of national or regional significance. At the same time museums are introducing new activities into their spaces. Performances, demonstrations of craft workers and participatory workshops are increasingly incorporated into museum programs. Museums are also increasingly inviting new participants and different audiences into their exhibitions and, as will be shown in later sections, many now allow and even encourage community groups varying degrees of participation in decision-making.

COMMUNITY ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

Ivan Karp in 'Museums and Communities' (1992) noted that:

Museums often justify their existence on the grounds that they play a major role in expressing, understanding, developing and preserving the objects, values and knowledge that civil society values and on which it depends. Arguments about the social significance of museums assert that museums can provide services that other institutions cannot. As repositories of knowledge, value, and taste, museums educate, refine, or produce social commitments beyond those that can be produced in ordinary educational and civic institutions. (Karp, 1992: 5).

Karp also establishes a distinction between 'audience' and 'community'. The former he defines as a passive unit which only becomes a community, or active agent, when the unit or group starts to speak for itself and articulates a point of view which then impinges on museum practices. Consequently, an active citizenry may represent a

changing mosaic of communities which seek to influence and control how museums act, what they examine, what they represent, and how they represent it (Karp, 1992: 14).

Using Karp's distinction, it is proposed that what many museums are experiencing today is a shift from a passive, and mostly singular audience, to a 'mosaic of communities'. This shift emerges from the socio-economic and political changes identified in earlier chapters. It is also a product of an emergent museology questioning audiences about their beliefs, opinions and desires and museums about their purpose or role in respect to their societies.

ACCESS

Museums in general are not doing enough to liberate their collections from the over-loving grip of their special interest audiences. (Thomas, 1993: 7).

'Access' has become a key word in museum debates since the mid-1980s. In Australia this has been demonstrated at recent CAMA conferences as well as by the initiation of various programs and debates that have taken access as their central organising theme.

'Access' can have many meanings. It can refer to physical facilities, (buildings and objects); access for the disabled; financial access; whether or not entrance fees should be charged or to intellectual access which Des Griffin has described as 'access to meaning' (Griffin, 1991). So, access can refer to access to ideas, to education, to fun, to collections, to different interpretations, to cultural and emotional access as well as access to

services. Anne Skates has argued that both historical and current practices within museums may restrict access. Whereas, in the past, museums reflected the interests and pursuits of elites, contemporary museum practices not only continue these traditions but are deeply embedded in the traditions of academic disciplines which, in turn, are products of a westernised scientific positivism.

By excluding, ignoring or peripheralizing it is easy for us to be seen as sexist, classist or racist about other peoples' knowledge. We need an approach that reflects the experiences of most of the community. We need other icons, other definitions and we need to think about other methodologies, theoretical frameworks and interpretations so that museums reflect the diversity of our community, and the historically precluded have access to what we say and contribute to how we say it. (Skates, 1991: 114).

Questions about access also include: who should have access? And to what? How can access be evaluated? Should access be balanced against other museum obligations? And, because access does not necessarily mean participation — that is, effective involvement in museums affairs — what balance should be maintained between external community participation and institutional control?

Too frequently the phrase 'access and participation' is glossed to imply the same thing. However, 'access' means to approach or gain admittance to, and 'participation' means to take part in or share in an activity or enterprise. The discussion paper prepared by DASET, *The Role of the Commonwealth in Australia's Cultural Development* (1992), in discussing 'Access and Participation' notes that:

The development of our culture depends on the involvement of Australians in cultural activities, as creators, audiences, participants and consumers. (1992: 7)

It goes on to discuss: access to cultural experiences, dissemination of the products of artistic expression, widening of audiences, more hands-on interactive displays, and ways of breaking the 'tyranny of distance' with outreach programs, touring exhibitions and increased facilities. The conclusion '... Finding a way to give consumers a bigger say needs to be seen as a priority of the 1990s' (1992: 13), typifies this rhetorical glossing that equates access with participation, subsumes audiences as consumers, and ignores questions about the ownership of cultural institutions and control of cultural production.

Arnstein's 'Ladder of Citizen Participation' (Arnstein, 1969), provides a useful evaluative framework that can help identify more clearly whether museums are limiting or promoting access and/or participation. The model is based on eight 'rungs' that measure the degree of com-

munity participation ranging from non-participatory and management-centred agendas that merely allow citizens to apply a 'rubber stamp' to projects, through to full citizen control. Intermediate 'rungs' cover increasing levels of involvement. A secondary level involves citizens in a therapeutic relationship wherein power holders educate or 'cure' citizens; the 'informing' level sees participation as informing citizens of their rights, responsibilities and options and a fourth level brings citizens in for consultation but on a tokenistic basis. At the next level advice may be received by institutions, but here it is more as a form of placation. Greater involvement through partnerships is evident at level six, although power is redistributed through trade-offs and negotiation. Level seven allows citizens even more power through delegation with management power delegated for selected parts or all parts of programs.

Greg Marginson has adapted Arnstein's ladder of participation to provide an appropriate model whereby communities and museums can examine whether access to museums is 'genuine in intent or outcome, and if not why not' (Table 1). This model can also be used by museums to develop strategies for improved access, and assumes that access goes beyond the community providing an 'audience'. Rather, it posits community access as meaning that the community becomes 'part of the creative process of museums themselves'. While Marginson's ladder might be useful as a means for goal-setting, it is notably evasive regarding the definition of community. Since communities are, by their very nature, plural and diverse, museums may secure the participation of one community at the expense of another. How far participatory ladders of this kind Marginson proposes are able to meet the requirement of mediating and balancing the interest of different and perhaps even conflicting communities is a moot point.

Marginson concludes that, although museums are increasingly laying claim to providing improved access, 'few would actively involve communities in actual exhibition development and very few (for example the SA Migration Museum and the Speakers Corner at Old Parliament House, S.A.), allow communities to have control over exhibition development' (Marginson, 1993: 10).

NEW ROLES AND FUNCTIONS FOR MUSEUMS

The museum profession is anxiously and urgently seeking a renewal of the museum as a necessary instrument of service to society. To serve a global heritage for global development. To serve man in his totality, em-

TABLE 1. Marginson's model of access and participation. (Source: Marginson, 1993).

Rungs On The Ladder Of Citizen Participation	General Policy Process	Exhibition Development	Collection Management
1. Public Relations	No participation by community. Key community leaders accessed only for promotion. May be manipulated.	Promotional purposes only.	Promotion only
2. Information Dissemination	Community accessed for promotional purposes and information on museum directions.	Community networks tapped for exhibition promotion, education programs etc., targeted to groups in community.	Community made aware of collections for exhibition and promotional purposes only. Community collectors may be accessed.
3. Information Collection	Community source of information to develop policy. Policy clearly 'of the museum' type.	Community access to develop content only according to curatorial precepts.	Community accessed for collection material only.
4. Interaction/ Discussion	Community formally consulted with, joint project development. Suggestions welcomed and may be acted upon.	Seminars, group interviews, research and collections from within community and implemented by expert.	Community is source of collection, key members used to acquire material held within museums.
5. Share In Decision Making	Policy formulation made without structure, might be unwritten. Decisions are prerogative of key people.	Exhibition devised and developed by key people. Wider group as helpers.	Management by key people. Notion of 'expert' asserted. Collection definitely within museum.
6. Partnership	Museum and community meet regularly. Decisions formally recorded and mutually binding. Decisions are democratically reached.	Exhibitions are joint undertakings and outcomes are mutually shared.	Collection jointly owned and managed. Decision concerning acquisition and disposal made democratically. Collection within museum.
7. Delegated Control	Power to organise and make firm decisions delegated to community. Decisions are binding but higher authority has veto which is not exercised without due process.	Exhibition programs devised and implemented by community. Higher authority has veto/censorship.	Collection managed by community. Higher authority has veto. Collection likely to be within museum.
8. Community Control	Power to organise and make decisions with the community. Decisions are binding. Community has power to raise funds and manage resources.	Exhibition devised, designed and implemented by community without external control.	Control with community over acquisition and disposal. Collection could be held by individual community.

bedded in nature in its totality, yesterday and today, seeking above all his future and the intellectual and material means to master it. (de Varine 1985: 185).

The impact of structural change, the emergence of new social classes and different audiences, competition from other leisure activities, new forms of knowledge and communications technologies, as well as pressures for accountability and access, are causing museums to re-evaluate their educational, social and institutional roles.

In the Marketplace or in the Community? Increasing access would seem to require increasing visitor numbers. However, to measure access simply in terms of visitor numbers is perceived by some critics and commentators as problematic. For Elspeth King 'the false pursuit of accessibility' is a product of the economic

convergence of museums, the heritage industry and tourism. She claims museums have become

profit making, pleasure-giving enterprises rather than the traditional centre for collecting, conservation, research and interpretation of the things which a particular society or community values (King 1991: 126).

The issue this poses, therefore, is that of Market or Mission.

The Museums Journal (February, 1990), devoted a special feature to this concern under the heading 'Museums: In the Marketplace or in the Community?' and asked leading museum people in Britain for their assessment. The responses reveal a division of opinion with some arguing for a return to traditional museum values and priorities and others claiming that museums must concede to 'irresistible demand forces'. Andrew

West considers that the controlling elements of most museums are increasingly to be found within the business community, and that museums are increasingly being linked to the 'community of business, of suburbia or the 'gentle-ised' inner city'. Within such a climate there is an emphasis on 'popularity' over genuine 'access', a silencing of scholarship, and a downplaying of the need for the traditional museum work of 'recording, preservation, display and interpretation'. Without a re-affirmation of museum purpose in terms of spiritual and educational needs, West warns, museums will become 'variations of antique shops and auction houses' (West, 1990: 24-26). Similarly, Val Bott refers to a UK survey of museums that confirmed museum visitors are predominantly from the wealthier classes. She stresses the need to make museums both accessible and accountable and to put the relationship between museums and their public ahead of commercial considerations (Bott, 1990: 28-30). According to Victor Middleton, however, the ideal of public service is mythical in that 'nine museums out of ten do not serve the general public in any overall sense at all; they serve the better educated middle class and have little or no appeal to the lower-socio-economic groups'. In contrast, Middleton advocates a 'visitor-oriented approach' and creation of 'exciting, stimulating displays in which the stories of objects are communicated most effectively to the general public in a welcoming atmosphere'. The traditional 'object-oriented ethos' he suggests, may lead to

self indulgent pursuit of personal, intellectual interests and hobbies, and a totally distorted balance between the fascination of scholarship and the demands of improved public access (Middleton, 1990: 31-33).

This issue of marketplace or mission is as relevant in Australia as it is in Britain.

Museums and Education.

Interpreting is about encouraging people to think for themselves, not about telling them what to think, or setting society's objectives. (Aldridge, 1989: 86)

As noted in Chapter 1, museums only started to see children as part of their constituency from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Today children, either as students in school groups, or as private visitors, constitute major audience segments at most museums. At the same time, the notion of museums as part of the 'parallel education system', that is, part of 'any form of education offered by individuals, societies and institutions which is separate from formal education programs', is being espoused through the *Ideas for Australia* program (Horne, Marsden &

Painter, 1992). Adult education as a primary duty of museums, is articulated as a function of education for citizenship. This may be partly to affirm museums along orthodox lines, and partly as a response to museums being seen as entertainment and leisure.

Within this broadened perception of audiences, the traditional role of museums as educators is also being re-evaluated. Strategies to improve educational services and facilities and make exhibitions and displays more attractive are always under consideration. Education that advocates informal approaches to interpretation and interaction are being examined in line with re-evaluations of theories exploring why people visit museums. Established educational philosophies emphasise exposure to knowledge where the teacher transmits information to a learner. In contrast, progressive approaches are more oriented to the growth of potential within individuals, knowledge as a means to an end and to be supplied according to the needs of the student, and the teacher as facilitator (Hooper-Greenhill, 1983: 127-129).

The ideas of Ivan Illich, Paulo Freire and Paul Goodman on de-schooling society have been drawn on by several museologists to suggest alternative educative strategies within museums. Illich, in 'Deschooling Society' (1970), attacks schooling systems and advocates life-long learning through 'educational webs' around a personalised curriculum that involves a program of learning based on individual needs and interests, with learning taking place in the family, workplace or society in general. Illich claims,

If a person is to grow up, he needs, in the first place, access to things, places, processes, events and records. To guarantee such access is primarily a matter of unlocking the privileged storerooms to which they are presently consigned (Illich, 1970: 22).

Freire says,

Nobody teaches anybody; nobody learns alone; people educate each other (Hansen, 1984: 179).

Michael Ames argues that if museums are to retain their relevance for contemporary society, this will be determined by the degree to which they are 'democratised'. This he defines as:

The extent to which there is increasing and more widespread participation in decision-making regarding administration, educational programming, and collection management in museums, and increased opportunities for independent thought and action in cultural matters.

The democratisation of administration means giving those who work in museums a greater say in the organisation and conditions of their work. The democratisation of education means reducing the role of educational intermediaries and increasing oppor-

tunities for independent and individual learning. The democratisation of collection management means making collections more accessible to the users. (Ames, 1985: 25).

The limited access to collections (some estimates suggest as little as 1-5% of museum collections are on display in major museums although this may be countered in small museums who display all their collections). The typically highly-structured and closed interpretation of objects; and the barriers to wider audiences, Ames suggests, may be overcome by opening up museum storage areas and data bases to the public. This he suggested would augment organised and interpreted exhibitions which currently cater to the interests of those educated classes who seek formal learning or tourist experiences and would make the museum more available and interesting to wider publics (Ames, 1985: 26).

Museums as Agents of Social Change. Many commentators are advocating that museums adopt a more pro-active stance — that they should be tackling problems associated with race, class and gender both in their exhibitions and public programs, and facing up to the politics of representation. Museums have been asked to rethink their boundaries and responsibilities (Hushion, 1992). As far back as 1972, John Kinard stated:

Museums must change from passive collectors and narrowly specialised scholars to active participants in meeting today's challenges. They must not only employ new methods but also be a new intermediary that will be unafraid to face complex problems raised by racism, material affluence, poverty, poor housing, unemployment, drugs, deteriorating cities, urban planning, education — all aspects of human existence — and to find the answers. Exhibits should be designed to present these controversial problems side by side with their counterparts in history, correlating current issues with historical facts. Our museums should be at the forefront of change rather than following the dictates of past generations. (Kinard, 1972: 153).

But it is not only in the social area that museums have increasing responsibilities. As Robert Sullivan has argued, there has been a paradigmatic shift from the 'vertical paradigm of progress' to a 'horizontally, global interdependent model'. This is changing the perceived relationship between humans and their environments where people are increasingly viewing themselves as 'participants in a horizontally interconnected ecological system and an interdependent, pluralistic cultural system'. Of course, this shift, and the realisation of the ecological crises the world is facing has ramifications not only for natural history museums but also for diverse museum formats. It requires all museums to be looking for solutions

to environmental and social problems, to be 'engaged institutions committed to the necessity of global survival' (Sullivan, 1992: 41).

REPRESENTATION AND MUSEUM PRACTICES

Museums are facing demands for wider representation of cultural diversity and inclusion of groups traditionally missing from museum representations. Apart from those already considered in previous chapters, such groups include the working classes, the poor, young people, children, the handicapped, and the aged. In Australia, the exclusion of working-class life can, in some part, be explained by the connections between the working-classes and immigration. As Andrew Reeves has noted:

Australian working-class culture is a migrant culture ... Many of the culture's institutions and social practices reflect this, as do elements of its symbolism and vocabulary. Australian working-class culture is not a closed system, but one shaped and amended by succeeding waves of migration (Reeves, 1987: 101).

At the 1993 'Images of Women Conference', Robyn Archer challenged museums to include representations of 'My mob':

Does it seem absurd to suggest that the attention to the petty criminal sub-stratum of Australia deserves a place in a museum? That lineage of mine peppered with SP bookies, vaudevillians, jockeys, card sharps, hoteliers, black marketeers and the sorts of sheilas who hooked up with them, cooked for them, dressed up for them, provided their alibis and bore their children.

Or the river culture that was not the glamorous paddle steamer kind? The boys who had to be conscripted unwillingly into World War I and then came back alcoholics. The itinerant fruit pickers and their wives who left school at twelve and shone their brothers' boots and milked the cows and married the returned soldiers who were already on the piss and longed for a home of their own in the city.

or the less than romantic life of the suburbs:

The life that was spent at home from five to twenty-one; that life that progressed from Enfield Primary to Enfield High to Adelaide University with values signified by lawns, meat and three veg, homemade clothes, Hills hoists, the advent of the telly, the past life of the radio, school fetes, Girl guides, swimming carnivals, First Communion, Modess, bicycles, coffee lounges, rock-n-roll, movie matinees, ranch night, Rowley Park Speedway, Oakbank races in the rain, cockling at outer harbour, the Globe newsteel, the Theatre Royal, Henley salt baths, the pill and Anzac Day. (Archer, 1994: 24).

As part of the Western Australian Task Force enquiry into museums in that State, a Labour History Working Party was established to explore concerns for the survival of labour history artefacts and to ensure that the history of working people would be adequately represented in the State's cultural institutions. Among the raft of recommendations, the Working Party noted the

need for both integration and specialisation (a greater priority in the Western Australian Museum on Labour history as well as establishment of a labour history museum); for the re-interpretation of existing collections to acknowledge the labour history embedded in all material culture; and for special assistance to small museums to enable them to adequately represent labour and work history. The report summary concluded that for labour history to be 'alive and vital', community interaction is essential as it is 'the active engagement of people which makes labour history' (Report of the Labour History Working Party, WA, 1991: 2).

These examples illustrate some of the ways museums are being challenged to eliminate the elitism that is often entrenched in traditional museum practices and which can be reflected in exhibitions, public programs, publications and the general museum ethos. This can result in:

- a perception that museums represent 'high cultural' pursuits of learning and science rather than places of popular enlightenment and edification;
- representations that imply a position of 'cultural authoritarianism' and deny the possibility of alternative perspectives (Crossley, 1991: 118).

A 'tyranny of collections' can often support elitist practices. In many museums the care needed for maintaining the holdings that have been built up historically compounds a preoccupation with the past that tends to focus on elites and their material culture. A possible consequence of this is that little attention is given to contemporary collections, or to recent history. Such a situation is also a barrier to any moves toward linking the past with present concerns and problems. It is a tyranny that shapes values, practices and potential development. Further, the extent of many collections, and the conservation expenses can tie up resources so that the museum is strangled by the responsibility of its collection.

AUTHORITARIANISM OF CURATORIAL PERSPECTIVE

Some critics argue that one of the barriers to participation lies in the attitude of museum workers to their audiences. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill describes a predominant position as one where the curator perceives him/herself, and is perceived, as an 'expert' whose responsibility it is to offer opportunities for the visitor to 'improve' and attain 'higher levels of knowledge and virtue'. This positions the curator as a 'moral guardian' — one who is also located within a wider network of social institutions, governmental and educational agencies of power and control

(Hooper-Greenhill, 1988: 224). There have also been calls for a brake on those forms of professionalism which distance museum workers from their visitors by creating institutional barriers between them (Jenkinson, 1989). Various proposals have been made to further open up the museum processes and these include:

1, Shifting the emphasis from the role of curator as a source of expertise to that of providing assistance to groups outside museums so as to use the museum resources to make statements within it, to enable enunciation of plural and differentiated views, and to make museums instruments for public debate (Bennett, 1990);

2, Democratising the processes within museums and between museums and their constituencies for a more people-centred approach (Jenkinson, 1989);

3, Adopting a team approach within museums that puts greater control in the hands of curatorial teams (Wright, 1991);

4, Revealing the authorship of displays so as to 'encourage contacts between visitors and public servants, and — by explaining how and why choices were made and hanging or artefact placement decisions reached — to empower visitors to make increasingly sophisticated judgements of their own, by sharing that very information to which the curator was privy in organising the display' (Wright, 1991);

5, Recognising the limited and homogenous nature in Australia of museum curators, researchers and registrars in professionally staffed museums, and addressing this through partnership arrangements between such professionals and alternative groups (Jones, 1991: 137);

6, Museums making commitments to community involvement in research and production of museum products (its collections, displays and publications) so as to 'break down the barriers' between 'experts' and 'non-experts', between high culture and low culture, between disciplines and between small and large museums (Ford, 1991: 145, 148).

Conversely, Elspeth King has argued for greater, and renewed 'investment in the clever curator' in the face of increasing take over of responsibility for museums by 'collection managers', administrators, business managers:

The secret of clever curatorship is that it is often above price. It is driven ultimately by love, passion and commitment to the community which the museum serves. It should not be glass-walled or stamped upon by corporate managers. If our museums are to survive and develop with integrity, it should be nurtured at all costs. (King, 1991: 134).

NEW DIRECTIONS

The museum is a didactic instrument, designed to build heritage awareness, not for a *public* but for and by a *community*. (attributed to Georges Henri Riviere & Hugues de Varine, 1985).

This section reviews some of the ways in which museums are becoming more 'community-centred' and responsive to community needs. Efforts to re-direct museums may be initiated from outside the institution, from the museum industry itself, or from internal pressures. These efforts may be pro-active or re-active: they may exert democratic principles or constrain and contain devolution of control. Referring back to the Arnstein/Marginson 'Ladder of Citizen Participation', elements of the different 'rungs' may be found in general policies, exhibition development strategies and collections management in various museums. The purpose of this section, then, is to identify some of the major factors for change and to evaluate the extent to which such changes have been introduced into Australian museums, and how effective these changes might be in advancing the basic principles referred to by Bennett in Chapter 1 (museums as collective public property, equal rights of access, fostering civic identity for all, and valuing and representing the culture of all groups within a society).

It would be difficult to find any museum in Australia that might be considered as wholly 'community controlled' with policy being determined by the community, exhibitions being devised, designed and implemented by the community, and collections under the control of the community or even housed within the private realm. Considering the general development and style of museums in terms of management, control, and community involvement, the style of museum most likely to endorse and implement principles of community control is the ecomuseum. However, neighbourhood museums, site museums and cultural resource centres are also being promoted as developments that challenge the values, and practices, of traditional museums. This section therefore concludes with a brief overview of ecomuseums or living history museums.

NEW POLICIES ESTABLISHED BY GOVERNMENT AND MUSEUM BODIES

In the last few years the Commonwealth and most State governments have initiated museum enquiries which have taken up questions of access and participation to a greater or lesser degree. These include:

Commonwealth Museums Review (1986-88). The Review of Commonwealth Involvement in the Development of Museums and Similar Collecting and Exhibition Institutions involved the Department of Finance and the Department of Arts Heritage and the Environment (now DASETT). The review was to explore the performance of Australian museums so as to identify areas of duplication; opportunities for economies and ways of limiting the Commonwealth's responsibilities in respect to recurrent funding for museums, collecting and exhibition institutions. In effect, the review sought to 'give improved heritage value for the taxpayer dollar'. Although the results of the Review were not published, each of the participating departments released its own discussion paper. These papers have generated on-going debates and informed subsequent policy reviews.

What Price Heritage? was released by the Department of Finance in 1989 and argued for a more consumer-orientated approach to the management of museums. It argued there should be an appropriate balance between public/private funding of museums and public/private benefits. On one hand, the paper acknowledged that government intervention in national cultural heritage is justified on the grounds that certain benefits accrue to the population generally whether or not individuals participate first-hand as consumers. However, it also suggested that private benefits (that may include entertainment, education, goods and services, corporate benefits and research) have, to some degree, been disguised as public benefits so that public moneys may have unnecessarily been used to subsidise institutions and their programs (Department of Finance, 1989: 26-32). Public accountability was, therefore, the key theme of this paper.

In contrast, the role of museums in preserving both the nation's material and intangible assets was the organising concern of a rebuttal from the Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories (DASETT). *What Value Heritage?* (1990) argued that the methodology that Finance had used to evaluate the services provided was flawed. However, DASETT, like Finance, was also concerned with accountability and a cost-benefit analysis although it argued that performance indicators should take account of the specificity of collecting institutions with differing missions and objectives. Although the paper appeared to have difficulty in quantifying benefits, it prefaced its discussion with the comment that

Museums are the cornerstones of our culture... they identify the values, creativity, traditions and tastes of our society, and thus constitute a vital component in the enrichment of quality of life values (DASETT, 1990: 5);

and concluded with reference to access for wider audiences:

For museums to enrich society's intellectual development and cultural identities and values, they must seek to reach all components of society. Increasingly the relevance of museums will be evaluated by the extent to which they meet the needs and expectations of all segments of society. (DASETT, 1990: 48).

State initiatives.

Queensland. Following on from a State government review of the arts in Queensland, a policy review of the Queensland Museum was conducted in late 1992. A primary term of reference was to determine whether the Queensland Museum was meeting the needs of a diverse Queensland audience, particularly in respect to access and equity. The report (released in 1993), addressed issues of access (physical and intellectual), cultural diversity (gender, class and ethnic), participation (particularly in respect to specific target groups — Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, women, and people of non-English speaking background), and the need for pro-active programs. A key recommendation directed at achieving these objectives was that the Museum effect a change in its internal culture to enable it to embrace access, equity and cultural diversity as well as the needs of regional Queensland. Other recommendations for structural change and resources to implement such measures indicated the need for the State government to provide for, and encourage, such a cultural shift. Social justice issues underscored the enquiry process, as the Report stated:

The Panel addressed the issues of access, equity and diversity in a concentrated way. These matters arose in almost every subject and context of the discussions enjoyed by the Panel. Consequently these matters can be found as an underlying issue in the majority of recommendations of the Report.

New South Wales. In 1989 *A Policy for the Development of Museums and Historic Sites in New South Wales* was released. It recommended policies for the major state collecting institutions, broadening the functions of Historic Houses Trust to co-ordinate policy and advise Government on resource allocation for regional and other non-government museums, and encouragement of a limited number of accredited regional museums of high quality over a proliferation of smaller under-resourced local museums. The Museums Association of Australia (NSW

Branch) published *A Plan for the Future in 1991* and this has subsequently been updated with *Future Directions for Regional and Community Museums in New South Wales* (NSW Ministry for the Arts Museums Advisory Council, 1994). The recommendations of this latest report aim to improve the quality of museum services to the public and the benefits listed include

greater access, understanding and enjoyment of local museums by the public leading to greater public confidence, commitment and support.

Victoria. There have been a number of reports and strategy documents prepared in this State over the last decade — the *Trudgeon Report* (1982), the *Hancock Report* (1986), *Guidelines for Victorian Museums* — a departmental policy document (1990) and the *Victorian Museum Survey Report* (1992). The thrust of this latest report was inward to museums. However, the inquiry also looked at levels of museum involvement with their communities and with educational programs. Museums that actively work with local organisations on community projects, the report stated, 'raises the profile of the museum in the community and establishes mutually beneficial relationships'. Further, it warned that those museums which do not participate in such activities 'will lose relevance to their local communities' (MAA & Arts Victoria, 1993: 60-61). Similarly, the report stressed the need for museums to develop educational activities and, to support this, recommended that established programs of assistance and training in museum education activities be maintained and that the role of museums in school education be recognised by both Arts Victoria and the Department of School Education (MAA & Arts Victoria, 1993: 62-63).

Western Australia. A major research into Western Australian museums was undertaken by the WA State Task Force for Museums during 1991. This review covered the Western Australian Museum as well as regional, community, specialist and other museums. One of the Task Force Working Parties (Public Presentation and Community Involvement Working Party) was given the brief to study 'the ways and the extent to which, museums encourage and respond to community involvement through visitor programmes and displays'. The Report noted that:

Museums face a growing challenge in the increasing (and increasingly discernible) heterogeneity of the society they serve, particularly in a social climate which confers rights upon minority groups and obligations on publicly funded institutions. It is well-accepted that

many sectors of the population do not or cannot access museum services and that, to achieve their public education objects, museums must improve their performance in this area.

Recommendations stressed access and community participation 'in all areas of museum work', the need to redress the disadvantages of remote communities in terms of access to museum resources and potential of diversity of 'presentation techniques and styles' to target a wider range of audiences (Western Australian Department of the Arts: Perth, 1992: 116-122).

Reviews of museum policies and practices such as those mentioned above are, unfortunately, dependent on both government and the institution involved taking up the recommendations and implementing them in the spirit of the report. Too often impediments are met, or made. Changes of government can intervene and bring new agendas to the fore, or economic constraints can impede implementation of projects or increased resourcing. Resistance to change within institutions often blocks new initiatives. Alternatively, a piecemeal approach to introducing innovative programs or policies may result in 'tinkering' that fails to bring about the radical change intended and only results in the institution maintaining the status quo.

Museum and Heritage Bodies. Professional associations such as Museums Australia are also taking up the issue of access and participation more actively with an on-going series of articles in 'Museum National', a forthcoming volume of 'Museums Australia Journal' which will be featuring issues of access and communities, as well as a planned in-service course for museum curators and administrators which will cover contemporary issues including those of access and participation. In addition, these topics have been central issues on the agenda at conferences over the last five years.

At a national level, improved community access to Australian cultural heritage collections is also the mission of the Heritage Collections Working Group. This body was set up by the Federal government under the auspices of the Cultural Ministers' Council and given the task of surveying the nation's collections and making recommendations about defining the nature and extent of Australia's heritage collections and coming up with proposals for improving the community's access to this heritage. Physical and intellectual access to collections was seen as a high priority of the Working Group, and recourse to information was seen as a means of increasing access.

In April 1993, the Working Group concluded its work and submitted its report, *Heritage Collections in Australia: A Plan for a New Partnership* (Cultural Minister's Council Heritage Collections Working Group: 1993). Three major recommendations were submitted. The first recommended development of a collaborative national database for heritage items of cultural historical and scientific interest; the second that an interstate touring program for non-art museum materials and collections be established; and the third that a national conservation program be implemented to protect and preserve Australia's cultural heritage. To implement these programs, and develop further initiatives, the Working Group recommended that a Heritage Collections Committee be established by the Cultural Ministers' Council. The Group also set out a number of long-term strategy objectives for the management of Australia's heritage collections:

1, 'intellectual and physical' access to our heritage;

2, 'care and preservation' of our heritage in order to secure that access for present and future Australians;

3, 'research and documentation' of our heritage: to conduct research which increases understanding and knowledge of Australia's cultural heritage and its contribution to an understanding of Australian society (research relating to existing collections and/or fields of interest not yet adequately represented in collections is fundamental to this objective); and

4, 'promotion' of our heritage to enhance the contribution of heritage collections to the social, cultural, educational and economic life of Australia and to relate the value and impact of Australia's moveable heritage to other realms of the National Estate.

CHANGING MUSEUM PRACTICES

In physical terms, access to museums has been improved in many ways. Capital development in new facilities (at Commonwealth, State and local levels) has resulted in greater attention being paid to physical access, new exhibition styles, and installation of hands-on activities in many larger museums. The 'tyranny of distance' is being overcome with several major museums establishing subsidiary branches, extending their outreach activities and producing a variety of touring programs ranging from full-scale exhibitions to display 'kits'. A proliferation of smaller museums, and some fragmented museum services are also helping to overcome the tyranny of

distance. Diversification of museum topics into specialised museums can also be an avenue for broadening access.

At the same time many institutions are looking at visitor facilities with the result that they are extending retailing, restaurants, and spaces for public activities such as performance, entertainment etc. These sorts of facilities are not only income earners. They are drawcards that can bring into museums many people who may not otherwise visit museums and who are increasingly looking for 'a cultural/social experience' more than purely educational content.

In the light of developments at both government and institutional levels many museums are reviewing policies so as to include access as a corporate goal. For example, the Australian Museum's Corporate Strategic Plan for 1990-92 refers not only to the goal of increasing multicultural awareness and representation but also to increasing information access through responding to the needs of the community, and demands from audiences, by examining museum texts, encouraging a more open attitude by staff and through promoting the collection (objects, data etc.) to the public and to other institutions (Skates, 1991).

The expressed philosophy of The Powerhouse Museum is: 'to be a museum for us all with a mission to ensure services and programs accessible to all the community'. It has also identified groups needing special attention to ensure access and equivalence of service and is catering for these groups with the introduction of tour guides for the hearing impaired, tactile maps for the blind, multilingual information brochures, signed tours, and community language tours etc.

At the Museum of Victoria, principles of social justice and equal opportunity (in respect to dealings with both employees and visitors), and the promoting of community access to collections, information and expertise, are inscribed in the Museums' corporate goals.

Although these types of statements are both broad and generalised, they do articulate a changing climate of attitude wherein practical measures may, and are being, introduced.

Museum Practices. Conceptual as well as practical changes are starting to be introduced into museums. Changes in museum philosophies, modification to interpretive practices, acknowledgement of societal roles and new relationships between the museum and its audiences underlie new practices being introduced into museums. The growth of interest in social history has

opened a window of opportunity for the histories of ordinary, working-class people, of minority interest groups, of Robyn Archer's 'mob', to be represented within the museum. Some of the major achievements have been: a re-evaluation of the way museums use their objects to make meaning, alternative modes of representation, and some moves toward a more participatory relationship between museums and their publics.

Shift from Object- to People- or Idea-Centred Approaches. Museums are gradually making a shift from object centred to people/idea centred approaches. Some critics claim a 'tyranny of objects' prioritises objects over contexts and assumes objects 'speak for themselves'. It is argued object-centred practices tend to ignore the human experience associated with objects, or to separate objects from processes. Further, objects, and collections determine ongoing collecting practices, display techniques and interpretive strategies, rather than using objects to represent themes or ideas. But, as George MacDonald and Stephen Alford told the CAMA Conference in 1989: 'Museums are beginning to wake up to the fact that their primary focus should not be objects, but people' (MacDonald & Alford, 1991: 1).

Stephen Weil's influential comments on 'rethinking' the museum are being taken up in this context. Weil has questioned the orthodox assumptions about museums that their primary purpose lies in the collection and care of objects. He quotes Nelson Goodman of Harvard University, 'Works work when, by stimulating inquisitive looking, sharpening perception, raising visual intelligence, widening perspectives, bringing out new connections and contrasts... they participate in the organisation and reorganisation of experience, in the making and remaking of our worlds' and suggests these principles can be applied to museum practices to make the underlying value of objects evident so that the emphasis shifts from object to ideas and the museum paradigm becomes one devoted to preservation, truth, and access (Weil, 1990: 44-60). When museums start to interpret objects in order to focus on ideas and values, on social contexts and processes they are better able to provide intellectual access, disseminate information, illuminate, pose questions, develop skills and empower visitors.

Shift in Interpretation from Closed to More Open Forms, to Alternative Perspectives. As the material content of museums comes under scrutiny, so do their interpretive practices. Revisionist historians have raised questions

about the positivism of museum displays and the closure to which this gives rise. Consequently, museums are being challenged to provide displays that reflect different perspectives or allow for the possibility of alternative readings. As Louise Crossley told the 1989 CAMA conference: 'We need to be less absolutist and more experimental, but also more explicit and more critical, in creating our product' and described the Migration Museum's exhibition *Strictly Black* as an example:

An exhibition of costume, all of it black, on dressmakers' dummies in glass cases, with small labels, and no other overt interpretative devices. It sounds as dull as ditchwater, as Clayton's as you can get. But it is not, because the visitor is invited to view the costumes from a single, simple, explicit point of view — that wearing black clothes communicates a range of messages about status, personality types and emotions in the wearer.

So this exhibition ranges from black underwear with its suggestions of illicit sex to the black homburg of respectability, from the black of mourning to the tail coat and top hat of social prominence; from the practicality of the little black dress to the anonymity of the hurnous. It also raises the question — why do I wear the colours, black amongst them, that I do. The exhibition says nothing about design, manufacture, age, provenance, fabric etc. of the costume. It is not comprehensive, but is coherent, and for me it was one of those 'ah ha' experiences which related my known world to a new view; 'of course, but I've never quite thought of it like that before.' (Crossley, 1991:118).

Allowing perspectives other than that of the curator or professional staff within the museum space goes a long way along the path to a more participatory environment and is a practice emerging with the advent and growth of community access spaces. On this same issue, Szekeres has argued that museum displays inherently present biased pictures and has suggested ways to remedy this by acknowledging the subjectivity of interpretations:

We present our version of the truth but we rarely admit this to the visitor and leave no room for there being any dialogue, debate or real visitor participation. One direction which can be explored is to make explicit the interpretive processes that go on in the selection of ideas and artefacts when mounting exhibitions. (Szekeres, 1991: 121).

One example Szekeres quotes is from a display of cultural diversity in childhood where the Migration Museum found they could not locate appropriate examples from working-class children. To overcome the misleading picture of childhood, a label was included which explained the omissions. This procedure can be extended by including an acknowledgement panel in each exhibition that explains concepts guiding makers

and include a section for visitor responses and opinions —

we must blow the myth of neutrality and objectivity and acknowledge the subjective nature of the interpretation we present (Szekeres, 1991: 122).

Less 'absolutist' approaches are ways in which the museum experience may be modified so as to be less daunting to visitors and to encourage engagement with the objects and ideas presented. And alternative perspectives can introduce balance into exhibitions as well as speak for different elements within the museum's audiences.

Encouraging Participative Learning. Underlying this thrust is an anticipation of different outcomes. Although the mission of museums is still predominantly one of education, as already discussed, there are a number of museologists advocating the 'deschooling' of museums. George MacDonald of the Canadian Museum of Civilisation suggested that, rather than reforming and imposing cultural values, museum displays and collections should be used

to help people better understand the human condition and environment (MacDonald & Alsford, 1991: 1).

Key concepts of this new approach are: dialogue, advocacy, democratization, participation and empowerment. Museums must:

Encourage the public to take a participative role in the learning and decision making processes. By addressing controversial issues they must stimulate debate. They must make accessible a wide range of information, representing different viewpoints and the values not only of the social mainstream but of minority groups too. And they must teach their audiences to think critically, to be able to weigh the opposing evidence and make up their own minds. (MacDonald & Alsford, 1991: 2).

MacDonald & Alsford address de-schooling more specifically in their study of the Canadian Museum of Civilisation (CMC), *A Museum for the Global Village*. 'Education', they note, is involved with the transmission of culture and is broadly interpreted as 'the development of knowledge, understanding, skills, and character, to programme values into its recipients and thereby influence their behaviour' whereas 'Learning' is perceived more as an interactive, self-directed, personal process which is a 'continuing and permanent process, an activity inherent in living which helps us to survive and progress — to come to terms with, and to exploit, our knowledge environment'. They argue that museums should be situated within learning so the programs at the CMC have been organised around the concept of a 'learning resource' rather than an 'educational institution'. (MacDonald & Alsford, 1989: 156)

The processes by which the learning function in museums is carried out are also being reviewed. Instead of a formalised didacticism, museums are realising that

Museum learning is self-paced, self-directed, non-linear, and visually oriented (Chandler Screven quoted in Gurian, 1991).

New information technologies with interactive and multimedia presentations offer ways into this form of learning. The Powerhouse Museum has used such technologies in its exhibitions programs. Touch screens throughout the Museum offer interactive opportunities. You can test your memory of yesteryear's fashions, try out your flair for decor, design a jet fighter, shear a mechanical sheep, or check your knowledge of power sources in the energy game. Overseas these developments are even more advanced as has recently been demonstrated with the IBM virtual reality interactive exhibition on Pompeii at the Australian Museum. A joint project between IBM and the Italian Government, this exhibition links the original frescos, artefacts and statues of the doomed city of Pompeii with a massive database of information. An installation of 26 touch screen computers and three-dimensional modelling software allowed visitors to interactively explore Pompeii as it was in 79BC. Visitors could take in a reconstructed garden, wander into a room of frescoes, stroll down the streets of the town, visit the stadium, explore the mansions of the rich and seroll through a banquet of Roman recipes. 'This is what museums of the future will look like' predicted John Harvey, a spokesman for IBM (Financial Review, 26 September, 1994).

Encouraging Community Participation. Various strategies are being developed by innovative museums to encourage greater community participation. Higher levels of community participation can be encouraged by obtaining public input into design and end-on evaluation through inviting visitor comments. Elaine Gurian has described how, during the 1960s, two museum directors (Frank Oppenheimer and Michael Spock) independently pioneered 'contextual, direct-experience interactivity' into exhibitions in ways that invited the audiences to 'participate in their own learning'; Oppenheimer with 'hands-on' participatory learning which he introduced into his Exploratorium, and Spock through consultation with audience groups. At the Exploratorium, visitors are introduced to science by examining how they see, hear and feel and the principles developed here have influenced subsequent science museums around the world, from

the Parc de la Villette in Paris, and Oklahoma City's Omniplex to the Victorian Museum's Scienceworks. As director of the Boston Children's Museum from 1962 to 1985, Spock brought a different approach to displays. He felt displays should empower visitors and give confidence to the learner to cope with the world, so he set out to find out what his visitors wanted to know. Prior to an exhibition being completed, mock-ups would be set up and audiences would be asked to comment on feedback boards. In this way audience and museum staff became display creators (Gurian, 1991: 179-181).

A strategy is being introduced into some museums with displays inviting visitor comments. The Migration Museum has used this approach extensively and it is now becoming a feature in other Australian museums. The Australian Museum's Rapid Response Programme is one such initiative. Here, the Museum prepares small exhibits (in a six-week turn around) on topical issues. An objective of the exhibits is to provide a space for visitors to express their views, cast a vote, or make comment. Since introducing this program the Museum has addressed topics as varied as oil spillages, wetlands usage, the 'Mabo decision' and GATT. The GATT presentation also included a theatre performance (GATT and FAX) and a public debate where alternative speakers were able to voice their opinions. The Museum's program sparked a critical response from Dr David Clark who, in a letter to the Financial Review (24 January, 1994), attacked the views expressed by speakers, dismissed the theatre event, and suggested that the involvement of the Australian Museum in such areas is inappropriate. In response, Director, Des Griffin, replied that this and similar programs are part of a wider strategy to make the Australian Museum a 'forum for the voicing of alternative views' and made the point that this position is consistent with the Museum's publicly stated mission 'to increase understanding of our natural environment and underdeveloped nations'. Consequently, GATT is 'of great relevance' to the Australian Museum (Letter to the Editor, Financial Review, 3 February, 1994).

A more comprehensive devolution of curatorial power and museum control was trialled in the CARA (Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation) project at the University of California's Wright Art Gallery. Alicia Gonzalez and Edith Tonelli describe how this interpretative exhibition of work from the Chicano art movement was the product of an advisory panel of 40-50

scholars, artists, and administrators with the gallery limiting its authority and reducing its role to one of facilitator and financial manager. It has been, they claim,

as much a process of achieving consensus as it has been an ongoing process of negotiating, beginning with the first proposal in 1983 and ending with the closing of the exhibition at its last venue in 1994 (Gonzalez & Tonelli, 1992: 262).

One of the objectives was to re-evaluate the processes by which museums organise presentations of a living culture so that the organisation processes would 'reflect the spirit and values of the culture' and hopefully develop a new model for under-represented groups to express their culture to a diverse public (Gonzalez & Tonelli, 1992: 265-266). Planning conferences and meetings of the advisory council met in various forms and formats to establish the structure for the exhibition process. The Advisory Council acted in both consulting and decision-making capacities and was involved at all stages of planning, implementation and evaluation. In addition, a national honorary committee comprised of members from the public-service, education, business and entertainment sectors ensured the project received support from diverse external bodies. With this organisational structure and the project's mission, the gallery was challenged to accommodate new partners without abandoning its professional responsibilities, to mount an exhibition that balanced both art and social context, and to find ways of acknowledging and communicating with a culturally diverse and uninitiated audience (Gonzalez & Tonelli, 1992: 276).

Opening Up Collections.

Physical access to museums and their collections is a prerequisite to intellectual access' (Cameron, quoted in MacDonald & Alford, 1989: 112).

Strategies for improving access in intellectual, physical and emotional terms include: more frequent changes of displays; open storage and access to collections; and computerisation.

1, Display Strategies. Although an array of motives may inform the allocation of more space to displays and exhibitions and the creation of more elaborate presentations, such exhibitionary practices are also perceived to be serving wider and more diverse audiences by popularising museums. Until very recently, the longevity of permanent displays could be extraordinary. A diorama depicting an Aboriginal Camp-site at the Queensland Museum was on display from 1914 until the museum closed its doors to the public at the end of 1985, in order to move to new premises

(Mather, 1986: 73). The Australian War Memorial still has a number of long term displays which have had an average lifespan of approximately 34 years. A uniform group display remained virtually unaltered from opening day in 1941 until 1983, as did a display of First World War heavy equipment (McKernan, 1991). In contrast, we have the 'blockbuster', increasing temporary displays, and the touring of exhibitions which, although serving multiple functions and having a number of controversial impacts, also offer greater access to objects and actively construct new, and larger, audiences.

2, Open, or visible storage. This concept was pioneered at the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology where the research collection has been organised as 'visible storage galleries' where artefacts are stored in locked glass cases or drawers but are visually available to the public. No interpretive material is provided but each artefact is extensively documented and books with computer print-out sheets for each object are available to visitors. As Ames describes it, the system operates

like a large library or supermarket, with the exception that customers are allowed to handle objects only under staff supervision (Ames, 1977: 65-79).

Another Canadian example is the Alberni Museum — a small community facility which has arranged two of its display galleries along a modified visible storage mode that combines

public access to collections normally held in out-of-bounds storage areas with a simplified popular catalogue format. A series of interpretive orientation displays weave through the total gallery/storage area to guide the visitor (Ames, 1985: 25-31).

The result, Ames contends, is a museum that enables individuals to participate in the recovery and documentation of their own history.

In contrast, the Glenbow-Alberta Institute at Calgary is a large urban museum which has introduced a stratified form of access which is limited and controlled by the requirements of particular collections and the intellectual interests of visitors. Access is arranged on three levels with higher density areas having lower levels of interpretation. Level 1 contains didactic exhibits with high levels of interpretation and lowest density of items; Level 2 contains publicly accessible study collections and Level 3 the highest density of artefacts and least labelling with controlled access. Located between the levels are education resource centres, study areas, and curatorial offices (Ames, 1985: 25-31).

The new Canadian Museum of Civilisation (CMC) has also proposed a novel approach to

increasing access to collections whilst ensuring security and conservation procedures are not compromised. Consideration was given to open storage and typological exhibits, to 'window-in-the-wall' visual access to collections holding room, as well as to the possibility of enclosed, transparent tunnels which would allow visitors to 'look but not touch'. The solution adopted, however, involves the use of Disney-style 'People-movers' which will carry visitors on a 'voyage of exploration' of laboratories, storage spaces and work areas. In this way CMC's 'treasure-vault will be specially unlocked for those modern day voyagers, and they will see a cross-section of artefacts periodically selected from the reserve collections'. This innovation, in conjunction with laser disc technology which will combine visual images of artefacts and textual information, is being offered as a solution to the dilemma of access versus preservation (MacDonald & Alford, 1989: 112-118).

These examples illustrate different responses from museums to the perceived needs of their different communities whilst satisfying the requirements of the institution in respect to collections management.

3, Computerisation. Although the CMC's use of computer technology is seen as a model, several Australian collecting institutions are gradually introducing new computerised features. For example, Old Parliament House, SA, has adopted new display techniques to provide new types of information. Susan Tonkin describes the use of computer technology to meet the needs of new audiences. This is an IBM InfoWindows, touch-screen package, which has been adapted to teach politics, specifically the South Australian electoral system. The program is entitled 'It's Your Vote' and is targeted at teenagers, under 18, who are about to vote and need to be convinced of its importance. The program uses two screens side by side for game of choices. Reported results are that schools groups (for whom the program was designed) 'love it'; that teachers of politics appreciate it; and adults also find the program appealing. The equipment (touch screen) is easy to use and non-threatening for people unused to computers. Tonkin sees this type of program as a suitable method of conveying vast amounts of information in a palatable and entertaining way (Tonkin, 1991: 99).

Interactive computer programs can make more information available as well as broadening the appeal of museums. Increasing access to collections and supporting data through computer

catalogues is on the agenda of a number of Australian museums, a development which should be accelerated if the proposals of the Heritage Working Group are taken up. If the concept of a 'Distributed National Collection' is to become a reality it will only be achieved by establishing a comprehensive information base for heritage collections comprised of a network of linked databases between museums holding significant material.

NEW ROLES: NEW TYPES OF MUSEUMS

Debates regarding the changing role of museums over the period since the 1970s have resulted in the development of new functions for museums, new museum formats and have resulted in expanded conceptions of the nature of museums and their purposes. Here, we review some of the more influential of these developments.

Access Galleries. The intent of access galleries is to enable community-based exhibitions, either generated from specific communities themselves, or as collaborative exercises between community and institution. The Migration Museum, which first opened its community access gallery in 1987, pioneered access galleries in Australia. The Museum makes space and facilities available through its Focus gallery and displays are co-operative ventures between staff and various communities who apply for space. Museum policy is neither to endorse nor reject views expressed by communities in their displays. However, the Museum does check scripts and ask display organisers not to offend. In a round-table discussion on access galleries, the director said:

Their stories are sometimes politically and socially horrific — their statements may be political rather than artistic, but we don't interfere unless the text is deliberately provocative. We have a curator to give advice if it's needed and the curator and I often discuss whether something is provocative or not, it's a constant tension. (Museum National, 1993: 6)

The concept has been taken up by other museums as a survey by Madelaine Galbraith (1993) reveals (Tables 2-3). Her survey, whilst neither comprehensive nor critical, shows that community access has been more readily taken up by art galleries than museums.

Museums with Access Galleries pending or under consideration at the date of this survey included: Australian Museum, South Australian Museum, Fairfield City Museum, Echuca Wharf Museum, Sydney Jewish Museum, Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum and Edith Cowan University Museum of Childhood.

The ways in which these various museums operate their access spaces may be viewed in conjunction with Marginson's model discussed earlier. Galbraith's information suggests that some museums insist on maintaining control, that others are taking up joint venture roles with their communities, and some are allowing community-directed displays. Despite the limited scope of this survey, it is, nevertheless, indicative of a changing climate within museums and suggests different relationships are being nurtured between museums and diverse communities of users.

New Museum Formats. Although the concept of a Children's Museum is not new, with the first one being opened in Boston in 1899, the idea has grown until there are now over 350 in the USA. In Australia the first children's museum to open was at the Museum of Victoria (1985), and later the Museum of Childhood was established at the Edith Cowan University, in Western Australia. The Children's Museum at the Museum of Victoria has hosted over 1 million visitors in the parent museum and touring exhibition in regional centres, with audiences made up of equal numbers of children and adults. Children's museums are usually theme-based, often holistic in linking arts and sciences, and families are their main target audiences. The challenge to exhibition planners is to encourage engagement and stimulation across this age range. An important feature of children's museums is the range of follow-up facilities they provide in the form of reference rooms, discovery rooms, libraries, models, and specimens. As Elaine Gurion of the Boston Children's Museum has said, children's museums are a 'fusion of its community centre, library and traditional museum' (Featherstone, 1991).

Opening Up of the Concept of Museums. Site museums, multiple site museums, house museums, living history museums, cultural centres, heritage centres, interpretive centres, and keeping places are all developments or extensions of the museum concept that are increasingly broadening the function, scope and appeal of the museum operation. Living history museums such as Sovereign Hill in Ballarat, Broken Hills' Living Museum, and the Living Museum of the West, are some of the developments that exemplify this approach. The latter, however has

TABLE 2. Access spaces by state and by type. * Art gallery and museum facility combined; ** Includes one combined art gallery/museum facility.

State	Museum	Art Gallery	Craft Gallery	Performing Space	Cultural Centre
ACT	-	2	1	-	-
NSW	8	6	1	1	-
NT	1*	3*	1	1	-
QLD	2	6	-	-	-
SA	3	2	-	-	1
Tas	1*	1*	-	-	-
Vic	10**	14**	2	-	-
WA	2	8	-	-	-

adopted the principles of the ecomuseum and it is the ecomuseum movement which has provided the museum world with a range of models and new concepts that, in the view of some, offer a radically transformative idea of the museum.

Ecomuseums. The ecomuseum movement took off in France then spread to Canada where it was adapted to Canadian circumstances. The concept has also been taken up in a number of countries around the world including Sweden, Portugal, Equador, India, and America, and is most likely to appeal to communities concerned about self-development. In many ways, the principles and philosophies underlying ecomuseums — community participation and community control, interdisciplinarity, and interaction with socio-economic development — are contrary to the traditional concept that museums are universalising institutions, fixed in time and space, presenting an objective view of the world.

Georges Henri Riviere is widely viewed as the founding father of the ecomuseum movement although it was Hugues de Varine, who coined the term 'ecomuseum'. Riviere defined the ecomuseum as:

An instrument conceived, fashioned and operated jointly by a public authority and a local population. The public authority's involvement is through the experts, facilities and resources it provides: the local population's involvement depends on its aspirations, knowledge and individual approach. (Rivière, 1985: 182-183).

Ecomuseums are based on a reassessment of the purpose and function of museums. In 1984, an ICOM group called the First International Workshop on Ecomuseums and the New Museology at which it declared its philosophy in a document entitled the 'Declaration of Quebec'. The Declaration stressed interdisciplinarity, communications, community and individual development, and service to 'the creative imagination,

constructive realism and the humanitarian principles upheld by the international community'. The basic principles for this new museology were summarised as follows:

In a modern world which is attempting to muster all the resources that can contribute to development, museology must seek to extend its traditional roles and functions of identification, conservation and education to initiatives which are more far-reaching than those objectives, and thus integrate its action more successfully into the human and physical environment.

In order to achieve this objective and at the same time involve the public in its activities, museology must have increasing recourse to interdisciplinarity, modern methods of communication used in all cultural action, and modern management methods which involve the consumer.

While preserving the material achievements of past civilisations and protecting the achievements characteristic of the aspirations and technology of today, the new museology — ecomuseology, community museology and all other forms of active museology — is primarily concerned with community development, reflecting the driving forces in social progress and associating them in its plans for the future.

This new movement puts itself firmly at the service of the creative imagination, constructive realism and the humanitarian principles upheld by the international community. It has become a way of bringing people together to learn about themselves and each other, to develop their critical faculties and express their concern to

establish together a world which takes a responsible attitude towards its own intrinsic riches.

In this context, the concerns of the movement, which is anxious to adopt a global approach, are scientific, cultural, social and economic.

The movement utilizes all the resources at the disposal of museology (collection, conservation, scientific research, restitution and dissemination, creativity) and

TABLE 3. Museum access galleries and facilities offered.

Museum	Access space incorporated with other display space	Museum directed displays	Joint directed displays	Community directed displays	Gallery services
Albury Regional Museum	Yes - 10%	Y	-	-	Y
Cobar Museum	No - separate	-	Y	-	Y
Griffith Pioneer Park Museum	Incorporated	Y	-	-	Y
Powerhouse Museum	No - separate	-	Y	-	Y
Westpak Museum	Yes - 40%	-	-	Y	Y
NT Museum of Arts & Sciences	Incorporated	-	-	-	Y
Queensland Museum	Yes - 50%	Y	-	-	Y
Townsville Museum	Yes - 66%	Y	-	-	Y
Migration Museum	Separate	-	-	Y	Y
Old Parliament House	Separate	-	-	Y	Y
Australian Gallery of Sport	Separate	-	Y	-	Y
George Evans Museum	Yes - 33%	-	Y	-	Y
Montrose Cottage & Eureka Museum	Yes - 100%	-	Y	-	Y
Merrigum & District Historical Society	Separate	-	-	Y	-
Museum of Chinese Australian History	Incorporated	-	-	Y	Y
Museum of Victoria	Incorporated	-	Y	-	Y
National Wool Museum	Yes - 40%	-	-	Y	Y
Science works	Incorporated	-	-	-	-
WA Museum	Separate	-	Y	Y	Y

adapts them to each environment and project. (UNESCO, Museum, 1985: 201)

The Declaration then went on to outline the processes whereby this form of museology could be acknowledged and developed.

In 1992, Kenneth Hudson reviewed the ecomuseum movement in France and concluded that although the ecomuseum promised to be the 'perfect solution' to perceived problems that

museums were grappling with, it was based on naive ideas that were 'impracticable and starry-eyed'. Today, he suggests, none of the ecomuseums in France carries out the complete ecomuseum task as it was originally conceived, nor are any of them controlled by the people who live in their immediate environs. By the end of the 1980s ecomuseums

had been absorbed into the system. They were in the charge of conventionally trained and qualified curators (conservateurs), they were controlled by the Direction des Musees de France, and they had been grouped into a special federation. They no longer represented a threat to anything or anybody. They had been tamed and made respectable. They were not revolutionary institutions any more. (Hudson, 1992: 28-29).

In a somewhat different vein, Dominique Poulot questioned the reformatory nature of French ecomuseums and doubts whether they ever promised a new relationship between institution and public. Even at their outset, he suggests, the concept of linking heritage to specific communities and localities was of particular interest to the French Ministry of Environment as the ecomuseum could be seen as part of the administrative framework for managing the environment and a vehicle for regional planning and national development. When Mitterand and the socialists won government in 1981 they introduced a new program of cultural preservation in which the ecomuseum was accorded a more political role. It could provide a

coherent overview of the customs, skills, struggles, subjective experiences and socio cultural resources of a given population (Querrien quoted to Poulot, 1994: 73),

and preserve traditional skills. This, Poulot suggests, reflected a desire to differentiate the sociocultural goals of the new government from those of the old, to represent community and working class values, and to rebuild nationalist-republican sentiment. Despite a new class of curators concerned with development of the community, and advancing a critical culture, Poulot claims the new museums were expected to repair the 'torn fabric of a society in crisis':

They were given the task of 'softening' such consequences of technological change as the demise of certain industries and the sociocultural conflicts resulting from economic crisis, unemployment and immigration. In sum, they were supposed to alleviate the identity crises of the 'victims' of the new economic situation and help populations in transition, especially in the villes nouvelles, or new towns. Unwittingly, the ecomuseum came to be identified with sites of industrial conversion. ... Activities previously associated with progressivism and the revitalisation of culture were being replaced by an artificial and manipulative atmosphere of nostalgia. The ecomuseum was falling victim to the contradiction between its function as representative of specific communities and its role in the

scholarly construction of an ethnology of France. Above all, the attempt by communities to reappropriate their cultural heritage proved difficult to reconcile with the need to promote tourism. (Poulot, 1994: 76, 80).

Irrespective of these criticisms, the principles underlying ecomuseums have stimulated debates about the role and direction of museums in general. They have had an international impact. They have provided models for communities, particularly for First Peoples and people of Third World countries. They have generated a whole range of fresh perspectives on museums, for both professionals in the field and outsiders concerned about culture and heritage. They have provided models for more democratising practices and raised the possibility of community empowerment.

CASE STUDIES

Kenneth Hudson, in 'Museums of Influence', listed 37 museums which he considered had

broken new ground in such an innovative or striking way that other museums have felt disposed or obliged to follow their example.

Each of these museums, Hudson claimed,

by its existence, its approach and its style, has met a real social need (Hudson, 1988: vii).

There did appear to be a Eurocentric bias to the listing, and, as Hudson indicates, many of these institutions are no longer at the cutting edge of museum practices.

Although the following examples include several of those museums selected by Hudson, they tend to be more concerned with the social needs of minority groups, of smaller communities who find themselves submerged, or who are intent on meeting very specific needs such as recovering lost histories and identities, restoring social cohesion and sense of community, or allowing people to take more control of their lives, rather than for more generalised needs identified by Hudson. The museums selected here are also ones in which explicit efforts have been made to use the institution either as a vehicle for social change or, alternatively, as a way of controlling change or modifying the pace of socio-economic development.

GALLERY 33, BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY, BIRMINGHAM, U.K.

When this extension to the Museum was opened in 1990, the objective was to take a Victorian ethnological collection and re-present the material to contemporary audiences. It was also intended to incorporate current thinking on the way cultural anthropology should be presented, and to provide hands-on, multisensory experien-

ces that would stimulate intellectual interaction with both concepts and the artefacts themselves. The mission statement refers to the Museum providing

a meeting ground of cultures — an exhibition about the way people live: beliefs, values, customs and art from around the world.

The display technique aims to:

encourage visitors to examine assumptions they make about their own and other people's cultures. It explores anthropological themes at a popular level, using a cross-cultural approach. It integrates artefacts from contemporary minority and majority cultures in Birmingham with the historic museum collection. (Jones, 1992: 222).

The displays attempt to declassify and mix objects by integrating material from art and history collections in order to break down both museum traditions and racial divisions. Gallery 33 aims to be a resource for developing 'antiracist' or 'race equality' education and for changing public attitudes. However, as a review of the Gallery's performance has argued, it fails to achieve its goals of being a 'meeting ground of cultures' because there is still a refusal to recognise that cultures will not interact on equal terms until societies operate on the basis of equality (Jones, 1992, and Jones & Ramamurthy, 1992: 33).

ANACOSTIA MUSEUM, WASHINGTON, DC

In the early 1970s, the Smithsonian Institute established this museum as an outreach branch under the direction of John Kinard. Kinard immediately set up a series of innovative and radical programs that dealt with issues relevant to the local community — a black ghetto area. The most significant feature of the Anacostia Museum is the dialogue which has been established between the Museum and people in the community:

The museum was an experience that enfranchised a community of people and enabled them to talk about their lives and to take greater responsibility for the reconstruction of themselves and their children (Gaither in Karp et al., 1992).

Under Kinard, the Museum pioneered new ways of involving the community such as unusual programs for children, teenagers and adults (Ruffins in Karp et al., 1992). The Anacostia Museum was launched to prominence with one of its earliest exhibits on *Rats*, a display that looked at the history of rat plagues and related this to the local experiences of rat infestations. This was followed by displays on the black history of Anacostia and another on social problems of the area (crime, drugs, housing, unemployment, education). These exhibitions have drawn on the community for planning and production and through this process of interchange the museum has become

a vehicle for improving quality of life in Anacostia (Kinard & Nighbert, 1972). (See Chapter 3).

BROOKLYN CHILDREN'S MUSEUM, USA

Founded as early as 1899, socio-demographic changes from the 1950s were the catalyst for major changes in the 1980s that transformed relations between the Museum and its neighbourhood. Under the directorship of Mindy Duitz, a new direction was forged to enable the Museum to more adequately meet the needs of its community. Part of the Museum's new mission was to accept unaccompanied children into the Museum, and to provide training opportunities ranging from high school and college internships to adolescent and adult volunteer opportunities for all members of the community. Audience needs were determined through research and evaluation studies. The result is an array of public programs, school programs, after-school programs, and a pilot latchkey program run in conjunction with the local school district. The program for unaccompanied children, Kids Crew, is run as an informal club with activities, library and discovery boxes. A development of this for older children — the Teen Intern Program — offers young people paid work experience in the Museum as well as workshops on careers and academic training. Duitz believes these programs will be

a model of institution commitment to community needs for museums as well as for other cultural, recreational and educational organisations (Duitz, 1992: 260).

AK-CHIN INDIAN COMMUNITY ECOMUSEUM, ARIZONA, USA

Nancy J. Fuller has described an example of an ecomuseum in the Arizona desert which has developed out of a community-based education model. During the mid-1980s there was a growing realisation among the Ak Chin desert Indian people that their traditional way of life was being threatened by rapid development. The concept of a museum, more specifically an ecomuseum, was proposed as a vehicle for passing on culture to the younger generation and for restoring community pride. The community was drawn into planning and development to create a

participatory, multi-disciplinary, community-operated educational institution organised around an integrated concept of culture, territory and human activity.

Community goals included: restoring a sense of community identity, promoting controlled development; and establishing a new type of museum, one that would be

an institution of self knowledge and a place to learn and regularly practice the skills and attitudes needed for community problem solving (Fuller, 1992: 361).

Some of the comments from community members confirm the positive developments flowing from the project:

The land development and clearance for the farm enabled us to realise the significance of our past through artifacts and archeological sites. These new insights awakened the curiosity of the community about where they came from, who they are, and where they are going. It made them realise the need for a cultural preservation program. (Charles Carlyle).

This is a start to help our community in preserving today's information for tomorrow's generation and along with this, our culture. (Elaine Boehm).

You get ideas from visits to other museums. Then you go back home and apply the ideas in your culture in ways that involve the whole community. (Wendy Aviles).

I think the museum staff can be the spark that will help the community broaden its in-depth understanding of the lifeways of our ancestors. We will be role models and educators to our community and to other tribes as well. From our archaeological training we are becoming cultural interpreters that will allow us to preserve and celebrate our identity. (Johnny Lopez).

CHINATOWN HISTORY MUSEUM, NEW YORK

Established in 1990, its aim is to reclaim the community's neglected past by exploring the role of Chinese New Yorkers, non-Chinese New Yorkers, and tourists in Chinatown. John Kuo Wei Tchen, the director, described this museum as a 'dialogic museum' that engages with its audiences to mutually explore the memory and meaning of the area's past. This dialogue is achieved in various ways. Firstly a specific element of the community is targeted to provide input from research through to exhibition and beyond. Visitors are engaged with questions, historical databases, and photographic collections to stimulate memory and discussion. In the Memories of New York Chinatown exhibition a series of options have been planned into the display so there are layers of information and involvement on offer to visitors and the ultimate aim is for each visitor to have the opportunity to collaborate with museum staff in 'documenting and discussing his or her memories and reflections'.

This unorthodox approach allows visitors to discuss themes and details of the exhibition; add their memories, photographs, documents and personal memorabilia to the exhibition and the CHM archive collection; help the CHM staff locate collections and people to speak to; and help the staff listen to and learn from the visitors' perspectives, interests, and needs so that the organisation can more effectively engage future visitors. (Tchen, 1992: 308).

CLAREMONT MUSEUM, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Opened in 1975, this is a community museum under a management committee which is directly responsible to the local Council. With one full-time curator and three part-time staff, the Museum provides a number of outreach services over and above normal curatorial and exhibition functions and through an array of activities interacts with the local community, church groups, schools, and the business community. Its activities over the 1992/93 year reveal a museum fulfilling its mission to 'serve the district and the community — past, present and future'.

The Museum started collecting contemporary costumes to provide a resource that will focus on the designers and retailers of fashion objects who lived, worked and/or sold their products in the Claremont business area between 1970 and 1990; hosted a fashion parade of the collection to bring the activities of the Museum to the forefront in the business district; and copied Claremont Rate Books onto microfilm as a community resource and to facilitate an inventory of the heritage buildings of the area.

In order to reach a larger, non-museum-visiting public and challenge these audiences to take part in public discussions on local issues, the Museum produced and placed in various public venues from Perth to Fremantle Regional displays that depicted the research facets of the Museum's work. Museum staff prepared a booklet for clubs and school in the district on how to set up an archive; they provided lectures to students in the Local History Records Management Course at the Edith Cowan University; and worked with the Heritage Committee to enable public access and tours to the Claremont Railway Signal Box. Under a schools program, the Museum also conducted a School/Work/Play program with Theatre Arts students from Curtin University for primary students and produced a local history package for secondary schools.

These examples illustrate some of the reasons why the Claremont Museum has earned a reputation as a progressive, innovative, and effective community museum that relates to, and interacts with, its community. Fortunately, there are an increasing number of museums around Australia which, like the Claremont Museum, are working at becoming more relevant to local interests.

LIVING HISTORY MUSEUM OF THE WEST, MELBOURNE

Aspects of this Museum have already been discussed in Chapter 3. However, its mission to

be a community museum goes beyond being a 'multi-cultural museum'. It thus lists, among its aims and objectives: the involvement of the people of the region in the collection, research and presentation of the history of the Western region; the recording of the history of the working people of the region to the present day; the creation of a mobile museum service; and the development and promotion of a community museum activity which is interactive and innovative. The Living Museum has also taken on the role of developing the concept of ecomuseums in Australia. By the early 1970s the western suburbs of Melbourne had come to be known as 'the deprived west'. Manufacturing was declining with the recession and changing patterns of trade, technology and job opportunities were emerging. However, with the support of Joan Kirner, and the new State Labor Government, there were moves to turn around this negative profile and the concept of a museum was seen as a positive way of achieving this. At the same time there was an upsurge of interest in social history and in history 'from below'. In the museum profession the concept of ecomuseums was topical and overseas models were being discussed.

Although the Living Museum boasts a small display and resource centre, it centres its activities on taking exhibitions out of the Museum and into public places; to producing books, reports, school kits, brochures, postcards, posters, diaries, calendars, theatre, newspaper articles, radio broadcasts, videos and live events; to setting up of 'history' trails in the immediate vicinity of the Museum and around various aspects of the region; and to making links with other groups, projects and institutions in the Western region.

Haffenden, in his history of the Museum has written that the general thrust of the Museum's work has been to focus on every day living, to 'become part of the dialogue and banter of every day life rather than be set apart as something separate', and to make the community itself the real site of museum work, in agreement with the principles of ecomuseums (Haffenden, 1994: 16).

In contrast to this positive view of the Museum, Chris Healy, who worked at the Museum in its early days, has also written about the Living Museum of the West. In attempting to open up the concept of 'community' in the context of the Museum and to expose some of the contradictions and problems, Healy has presented a more critical view of the Museum. Its origins he attributes less to some 'organic development' growing out of shared interests and out of at-

tempts to assert a local identity, and more to the cultural intervention of liberal reformist politics that prevailed in Victoria during the early 1970s as well as the availability of State and Commonwealth funding for projects that brought together history, celebration and nationing. The lack of expertise and professionalism of staff, Healy claims, were problematic, whilst the innovative approach so admired by Haffenden, he suggests may have been praiseworthy but in practice:

the results mirrored the worst features borrowed from museums and history: from museology an obsession with collection and preservation, and from history the empiricism of the historical fact. (Healy, 1991: 163).

Healy's most damning criticism is that the Museum has become an institution which has been 'rarely participatory and rarely co-operative' (Healey, 1991: 165). His critique of the Museum is part of a broader discussion of public history and its claims to speak for the people, but also represents the climate of doubt that exist in respect to ecomuseums in general, and the Living Museum of the West, in particular.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA

A model of partnership between a national body and regional museums has been established by the travelling exhibition, *Murray Darling Basin Exhibition*. The exhibition was mounted by the National Museum but incorporated local museums as participants. The purpose of the project was: to stimulate debate about cultural factors underpinning environmental problems in the Murray Darling Basin, to explore interactions between human and environmental histories of the basin, and to encourage local awareness of heritage values — to encourage awareness of history by 'reading the landscape we have created'. The exhibition visited around 20 towns in the basin in 1993-1994, and at each site the display was augmented with local material prepared by community groups, museums and historical societies. Displays covered employment, environmental degradation, loss of sense of community, inter-intra-state tensions and rivalries. A secondary aim of the project was to provide a model for future co-operative relations between major and local museums, and to assist local museums rekindle sense of community and local identity (Baker, 1991: 278-281).

GUIDE TO KEY SOURCES

BENNETT, Tony, 1989. Museums and public culture: History, theory and policy. This article explores the influences of principles of access

and participation on Australian museum policies over the last two decades and speculates on the effects that the origins and early history of the public museums have had on public culture.

COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM ASSOCIATIONS, 1991a. *Something for Everyone — Access to Museums*. The conference papers deal with various aspects of access (physical and intellectual) with key speakers addressing the notion of access for museums (Des Griffin), cultural diversity (Claudine Brown), defining limits to access (Robyn Lowe, J Specht, Chris Anderson and John Jessop), as well as a number of interesting papers covering access in local museums.

COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM ASSOCIATIONS, 1991b. *Australian Museums — Collecting and Presenting Australia*. The conference theme of Collections attracted a large number of speakers who covered many aspects of access, from collections themselves, changing perceptions about cultural heritage, cultural diversity, to what we collect and why. Sections dealt with national collections — defining them to determining criteria for collections — and papers highlighted selected case studies of Commonwealth museums. Papers on community museums came from Ann Villiers (Community needs and public programs), Carolyn MacLulich (Public programs at the Australian Museum), Viv Szekeres (Culture-specific museums), Ilma O'Brien (Partnership arrangements), Helen Light (Jewish Museum), Steve Hemming (Camp Coorong).

GALBRAITH, Madelaine, 1993. *Community access exhibition venue listing*. Results of a survey to ascertain the extent of community access galleries in museums and art galleries.

HAFFENDEN, Peter, 1994. 'Your History Mate. The Work of a Community Museum in Melbourne's Western Suburbs'. An in-depth history of the Museum to commemorate ten years of operations. Haffenden, who has had a close involvement with the museum since its inception and has co-ordinated exhibitions there, chronicles the origin, early development, underlying philosophies and current activities. He includes a useful chapter describing some of the ways in which this museum is organised, manages its human and financial resources, obtains funding, and interacts with local groups, individuals and business organisations.

HEALY, Chris, 1991. *Working for the Living Museum of the West*. Healy, who worked at the Museum in its early days, provides a critical analysis of the Museum as a cultural project.

KARP, Ivan & LAVINE, Steven D. (eds), 1991. *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. A collection of essays from museum directors, art historians, anthropologists, folklorists and historians that address the politics of culture with key sections on culture and representation; art museums, national identity and the status of minority cultures; museum practices; festivals and 'other cultures' and museums.

KARP, Ivan, MULLEN KREAMER, C. & LAVINE, Steven D. (eds), 1992. *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*. Contributors examine the interplay between museums, festivals, tourism and historic preservation, and the communities these museums represent and serve. Mindy Duitz writes on the Brooklyn Children's Museum and discusses the Museum's response to changing demographic patterns in its local community. Alicia M. Gonzalez and Edith A. Tonelli describe the CARA project as a model for community participation and evaluate its strengths and weaknesses, and Nancy J. Fuller looks at how the Ak-Chin Indian Community have used an ecomuseum project as a vehicle for community empowerment. George F. MacDonald writes on the Canadian Museum of Civilisation and describes how the Museum functions as an information resource to meet its mandate to serve multicultural, national and international audiences. Similarly, John Kuo Wei Tchen writes about his Chinatown History Museum as a dialogic museum which is reshaping the Museum's relationship with the communities it serves.

LUMLEY, Robert, 1988. *The Museum Time Machine: Putting Culture on Display*. A collection of essays on the role of museums today which address themes of nostalgia, museums in a changing world and sociology of the museum public.

MARGINSON, Greg, 1993. *Access — Can it lead to community control?* Marginson looks at how the theory of access impacts on the policies, exhibitions and collections of museum, and suggests a participation model to evaluate the effectiveness of access programs implemented by museums.

MUSEUM NATIONAL, 1993. *Access: Commitment or containment?* A round-table discussion of issues of access in Australian museums which focussed on the questions: How do we define community? What impact does the notion of access have on the institution and the community? Is the consequent relationship a genuine one reflecting commitment and empowerment, or does it represent containment of ideas and issues?

MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA INC., VICTORIAN BRANCH, 1991. *Museums Towards Tomorrow: Serving the Future Public*. Questions of access underlie the papers presented to this conference.

POSTMAN, Neil, 1990. *Museum as dialogue*. Postman argues that the good museum conducts timely arguments with society, directing the attention at what is difficult and even painful to contemplate, with the essence of a museum being its ability to present to its visitors alternative visions of culture. In this way museums have a critical role in keeping choice and critical dialogue alive in conducting an argument with its society.

POULOT, Dominique, 1994. *Identity as self discovery: The ecomuseum in France*. As a specialist on the history of museums and the invention of national heritage, Poulot questions the radical effects of the ecomuseum movement and the 'new museology'. He charts the emergence of the movement in France and the professional and political backgrounds that prompted the development of the movement and then used these new institutions to further the ideological interests of various museological, cultural and political programs.

THOMAS, Daniel, 1993. *Access — The many kinds in many minds*. This paper offers an overview of access as a facet of government cultural policies and covers various aspects of access, both physical and intellectual, with a final warning on excessive access or over-interpretation.

WEIL, Stephen E., 1990. 'Rethinking the Museum and other Meditations'. Weil examines the purposes of the museum in the late twentieth century and suggests that museums make visitors more central to their operations in order to better serve the larger society whilst also fulfilling professional aspirations and institutional missions. See also Weil, Stephen E., 1990. 'Rethinking the museum', in *Museum News*, March/April.

UNESCO, 1985. *Images of the Ecomuseum*. This was a special issue dedicated to the memory of Georges Henri Riviere, the French founder of ecomuseums. Contributors provide an overview of the ecomuseum and the 'new museology' with articles covering the French experience and spread of the concept to Canada, thence the development of various ecomuseums around the world in Sweden, Portugal, Venezuela, Africa, Brazil and the USA. Also included are details of the Declaration of Quebec.

VERGO, Peter, 1989. *The New Museology*. Essays by Charles Saumarez Smith, Ludmilla Jordanova, Paul Greenhalgh, Colin Sorensen, Nick Merriman, Stephen Bann, Phillip Wright, Norman Palmer and Peter Vergo on a range of topics associated with purposes of museums rather than methods and concerned with theoretical re-evaluation of museums.

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